

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 056960

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TO USDEL ASWAN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 056960

LIMDIS TOSEC 471

FOLLOWING REPEAT LISBON 1397 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BONN LONDON
LOURENCO MARQUES LAUNDA MADRID PARIS RABAT NATO DIA USCINCEUR
OPORTO BY POUCH PONTA DELGADA BY POUCH DATED 13 MAR 75

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1397

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER MARIO SOARES

REFS: (A) STATE 55943; (B) LISBON 1393; (C) LISBON 304

1. CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER SOARES AT MY REQUEST TODAY AND
GAVE HIM COPY OF DEPARTMENT PRESS GUIDANCE CONTAINED REFTEL
(A). SOARES READ IT WITH INTEREST.

2. TOLD SOARES I UNDERSTOOD HIS POSITION WAS PRESENTLY VERY
DELICATE AND I DID NOT WANT TO DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT MAKE
MATTERS MORE COMPLICATED. NEVERTHELESS I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT
PRESENT ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN TO LINK USG TO ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT.
SHOWED HIM PRESS STORY THIS MORNING CLAIMING I HAD BEEN IN
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PAGE 02 STATE 056960

CHILE BEFORE COMING HERE AND CITED RADIO REPORT THAT I HAD

CALLED ON SPINOLA ONE WEEK BEFORE THE COUP. TOLD HIM UNLESS HE SAW SOME OBJECTION I INTENDED TO BE MORE VIGOROUS IN DENYING THESE CHARGES PUBLICLY. I WAS ALSO ANXIOUS TO HAVE HIS ADVICE ON WHAT USG MIGHT DO TO BE HELPFUL IN PRESENT SITUATION.

3. SOARES SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS AND SAID WHAT I WANTED TO DO WAS MY DECISION. HE WAS, IN FACT, AN "INTERIM" MINISTER RIGHT NOW AND HIS ONLY KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING CAME FROM NEWSPAPERS. THE MILITARY WERE MAKING ALL THE DECISIONS AND WILL DECIDE ON STRUCTURE OF NEW COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. IF THEY ASK HIM TO TAKE A PORTFOLIO HE WOULD THEN HAVE TO JUDGE WHETHER ACCEPTANCE WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH HIS STAND AGAINST DICTATORSHIP. IF THEY DON'T ASK HIM, HIS MORAL DILEMMA IS SOLVED.

4. SOARES SAID HE COULD TELL ME THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THE OTELO STATEMENT WITH PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES AND PRIME MINISTER VASCO GONCALVES WHO HAD AUTHORIZED HIM TO TELL ME THAT "OTELO WAS SPEAKING IN HIS PERSONAL CAPACITY AND NOT AS REPRESENTATIVE OF GOP." WHEN I PRESSED HIM FURTHER HE SAID PRESIDENT HAD TOLD HIM HE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT VIOLENCE. "BUT OF COURSE," SOARES ADDED, "KIDNAPPING AND VIOLENCE AGAINST AMBASSADORS HAPPEN IN MANY COUNTRIES AND IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU GOP WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE."

5. SOARES SAID POLITICAL PARTIES HAD BEEN SUMMONED BY PRIME MINISTER YESTERDAY AND TOLD ABOUT INSTITUTIONALIZATION PROGRAM (SEE REFTTEL B). NET EFFECT OF GIVING BROADER POWERS TO REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WAS TO PUSH THE POLITICAL PARTIES OUTSIDE THE POWER SPECTRUM (THE PHRASE HE USED WAS "MARGINALIZE POLITICAL PARTIES"). SAID THE PARTIES NOW HAD TO DETERMINE WHETHER IT WAS WORTHWHILE PARTICIPATING IN THE PROCESS.

6. SOARES CLOSED BY SAYING HE HAD ALWAYS TRIED AS FOREIGN MINISTER TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH U.S. AND THE WEST IN GENERAL. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE POLICY OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE.

7. BEFORE SEEING SOARES I CHATTED WITH HIS AIDE, SA MACHADO. HE TOLD ME SOARES WAS TARGET OF SAME KIND OF ORGANIZED
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PAGE 03 STATE 056960

CAMPAIGN THAT WAS BEING DIRECTED AGAINST ME. NIGHT OF COUP MES EVEN SENT SOMEONE TO BRUSSELS TO PUT OUT A STORY THAT SOARES HAD BEEN INVOLVED WITH SPINOLA. SA MACHADO ALSO THOUGHT OTELO STATEMENT WAS PART OF SMOOTHLY FUNCTIONING COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA APPARATUS. CONCLUDED THAT ALL THIS WAS PART OF TOTAL EFFORT TO REMOVE ANY POTENTIAL OPPOSITION. HE SAID COSTA GOMES WAS SO WEAK THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD BEEN UNABLE TO GET PRESIDENT TO ISSUE ANY PUBLIC COMMENT ON OTELO

STATEMENT, ALTHOUGH HAD TRIED TWICE.

8. COMMENT: SOARES IS AN EXHAUSTED MAN. THE DAY AFTER I
ARRIVED HERE IN MID-JANUARY I MET WITH HIM AND FOUND HIM DEEPLY
CONCERNED AND EXTREMELY NERVOUS (REFTEL C). BUT AT LEAST
THERE WAS FIGHT IN HIM. TODAY HE WAS UNCOMMUNICATIVE, AND I HAD
THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE WAS NOT TOO MUCH FIGHT LEFT. HOPE-
FULLY, I WAS NOT WITNESSING AN IBERIAN MASARYK IN THE MAKING.

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